

Sustainable island tourism from the perspective of the local population in CV: a post-Covid19 study

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, island countries, economic development, local communities, rural tourism

Although it is more than proven that tourism has a positive impact on the global economy, environmental and social impacts on destinations are often considered irrelevant and little studied until they become truly visible and tourism activity becomes incompatible with the destination. Today, tourism is responsible for the mobilisation of more than 900 million international tourists, which represents a 63% decrease compared to the pre-pandemic period. Moreover, tourism has a weight of approximately 9% in global GDP (UNWTO, 2023c).

In his work, Cardoso, Biau, Pereira, Figueiredo & Oliveira (2023) concludes that the negative impacts of tourism often outweigh positive ones. Additionally, depending on the nature of the societies and the geographical territory in which tourism occurs, it produces different effects. From an economic point of view, the multiplier effect is considered one of the most positive impacts on destinations. In addition to boosting the local economy, it generates a value chain and indirect effects in various areas. With regard to social effects, in the worst case scenario, Page (2007) specifies that tourism can emerge as a source of conflict between hosts and visitors in destinations where its development entails perceived and real impacts.

For this reason, it is currently a concern of many countries and even international organisations to efficiently manage tourism in order to maximise the positive effects of the activity and promote sustainable development, without negative impacts interfering too much with the destination.

Tourism has now become a major source of income for many countries and regions, as well as a way of combating poverty and promoting the development of underdeveloped and developing economies. It is difficult to believe that tourism in developed countries is more productive than in developing ones. This has raised questions about the viability of tourism's contribution to some destinations. The fact is that tourism activity needs strong economic, social and governmental support, which is found precisely in developed countries. Moreover, its positive effects are seen in the short term, but when it produces negative impacts, these tend to be long term and almost irreversible.

On a different note, the development and economies of island regions have been little studied by the scientific community, indeed, their importance in ecological and social

terms is rarely recognised. What happens is that the growth and development of these regions ends up being a senseless and frustrating copy of patterns followed by the great world powers. Not having many resources, they adopt tourism to fill the gaps, but without proper planning.

Tourism must be an activity adapted to the destination, especially in island regions where environmental and social fragilities are most pronounced. In fact, the islands of Cabo Verde (CV) have been chosen as the object of study because they are highly dependent on tourism for their development and economic growth.

The aim of this study is to assess the growth and development of tourism in CV as a means for the sustainable development of its islands. Therefore, the question is posed: Is the economic and social development of undeveloped island countries, such as CV, associated with the expansion of tourism activity?

Furthermore, the perspective of the local population regarding the possible development of a sustainable form of tourism - rural tourism - on the island of Santo Antao (SA) is explored. Therefore, this paper evaluates the contribution of tourism to the development of CV. To do this, it is necessary to understand the economic and social dynamics of tourism, to compare economic growth with the growth of tourism activity, and to identify the main failures of tourism expansion.

Moreover, with the pandemic, the world came to a standstill and everyone was in reclusion for months. The impact of the pandemic on tourism was enormous, and recovery has been slow. One of the consequences of the long period of confinement was people's desire to be outdoors and to avoid crowds. Thus, it is important to advance the role of tourism in valorising and safeguarding rural villages together with their associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, values and local activities (agriculture, forestry, livestock and/or fisheries), according to UNWTO (2022). This is why the island of Santo Antão (SA) was chosen for this research, as the island is endowed with a great variety of landscapes and offers tourists a wide range of unexplored places and tourist activities, especially ones that involve contact with the local population and nature.

Therefore, in line with the above statements, the specific objective of this research is to analyse to what extent rural tourism in SA can be seen as an option for the resumption of post-Covid19 tourism, as a sustainable tourism modality. Based on this objective, the following additional research questions are formulated: Is rural tourism in SA an effective strategy for the post-Covid tourism recovery in CV? Is the development of rural tourism in SA a good strategy to diversify the tourism activity in CV?

Based on the objectives outlined for this study, the qualitative approach was used to analyze whether rural tourism in Santo Antão (SA) can be considered as an alternative to post-Covid tourism, which is not concerned with numerical representativeness, but rather with deepening the understanding of a social group, an organization, etc (Gerhardt & Silveira, 2009; p. 31). The data collection instrument used in this research was the questionnaire, which was unstructured (semi-structured) and had open ended questions, i.e., the respondents were free to develop each situation in any direction they deemed appropriate, using their own language, and giving opinions. Aiming at obtaining

information about the objectives set out, a group of people was interviewed where all the information needed to answer the research question was gathered.

This paper concludes that tourism can be an important tool for the development of island regions and countries where the economy is fragile. Specifically, tourism in CV is in a growth phase, but the current planning and management process of the activity is leading it further towards mass and unsustainable tourism, even when plans or strategies are presented that appear to be sustainable on paper. Additionally, the current tourism model implemented in CV implies the concentration of power in higher governmental bodies, without opening spaces for local tourism planning, when, in reality, local actors are more connected to the environment than the government. Thus, we can see from the qualitative analysis made in 2022 how the local population have opted for rural tourism. However, the statistical data obtained for the same year 2022, published in 2023, show that the tourism market in the islands of CV is still oriented towards sun and beach tourism (mass).

References

- Cardoso, A., Biau, S., Pereira, M. S., Figueiredo, J., & Oliveira, I. (2023, June). The Perception of Host Communities on the Impact of Tourism in the Jericoacoara Region (Brazil). In ICTR 2023 6th International Conference on Tourism Research. Academic Conferences and publishing limited. [Cardoso+Pereira+et+al+025 \(2\).pdf](#)
- Gerhardt, T. E. & Silveira, D. T. (2009). Research Methods. UFRDS Publishing House. https://www.academia.edu/10355146/M%C3%A9todos_de_pesquisa_Gerhardt_e_Silveira
- Page, S. J. (2007). Tourism Management: Managing for Change (2^o ed.). USA: Elsevier Ltd.
- UNWTO (2023). Tourism on track for full recovery as new data shows strong start to 2023. <https://www.unwto.org/news/tourism-on-track-for-full-recovery-as-new-data-shows-strong-start-to-2023>, 9 may 2023.
- UNWTO (2022). Rural Tourism (2022, 15 April). www.unwto.org. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/rural-tourism>